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ABSTRACT

Although America is engaged in a national dialogue about race, children's voices have yet to be heard on the matter. This study used a series of focus groups and a national poll of 10- to 17-year-olds to examine their views about race and the role of the media in shaping understanding. Participating in the polls were 1,200 children, 300 in each group of Asian, African, Latino, and White Americans. Among the key findings of the study are the following: (1) children of all races watch a great deal of television; (2) African-Americans strongly felt that entertainment media represent their race more fairly than the news media, while Asian-Americans slightly favored the news media; (3) children of color primarily chose African-Americans as those they admire and White children primarily chose White television figures as favorites; (4) children agreed that it is important for youth to see people of their own race on television, although children of color had stronger feelings than White children; (5) children thought that White characters on entertainment television were most likely to be shown in a positive way while Latino characters were most likely to be negatively portrayed; (6) children across all races associated positive characteristics more with the White characters on television and negative characteristics more with the minority characters; (7) all children agreed that there were racial differences in the types of role portrayed on television; and (8) White children were more likely to say that money rather than race divides people in America, while other groups were split in their opinion. (KB)

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A Different World

Children's Perceptions of Race and Class in the Media

I love watching TV.
I believe what I see.
I'm still looking
for me.

PS 027852

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CHILDREN NOW

A Series of Focus Groups and A National Poll of Children

Currently celebrating its tenth anniversary, **Children Now** is a nonpartisan, independent voice for America's children, working to translate the nation's commitment to children and families into action. Children Now's mission is to improve conditions for all children with particular attention to the needs of those who are poor or at risk.

Recognized nationally for its policy expertise and up-to-date information on the status of children, Children Now has a distinguished record of achievement in promoting solutions to problems facing America's children. A hallmark of the organization is the broad partnerships its programs forge with parents, community leaders, lawmakers, businesses and the media. Children Now is a national organization with special depth in California.

The Children & the Media Program works to improve the quality of news and entertainment media for children and about children's issues. We seek to accomplish that goal through independent research, public policy development and outreach to leaders in the media industry.

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- Young people overwhelmingly think that it is important for children to see people of their own race on television. Children of color are most likely to think so.

- White and African-American children say they see people of their race on television while Latino and Asian children are much less likely to see their race represented.

- Across all races, children are more likely to associate positive characteristics with White characters and negative characteristics with minority characters.

Children associate:

• having lots of money	• breaking the law
• being well-educated	• having a hard time financially
• being a leader	• being lazy
• doing well in school	• acting goofy
• being intelligent	
more often with the White characters on television.	more often with the Minority characters on television.

- Children think that the roles of boss, secretary, police officer and doctor in television programs are usually played by White people while the roles of criminal and maid/janitor on television are usually played by African-Americans.

- Children of color primarily choose African-Americans as those they admire and White children primarily choose White television figures as their favorites.

- Across all races, children agree that the news media tend to portray African-American and Latino people more negatively than White and Asian people, particularly when the news is about young people.

- Race and social class are tightly connected in children's minds — with White characters seen as having more money and minority characters seen as struggling financially. Similarly, White children are much more likely than children of other races to think families on television have the same amount of money as their families.

71% of White children see people of their race 'very often' on television compared to 42% of African-American children, 22% of Latino children and 16% of Asian children.

- Children have great faith in media's power and its potential. Over 80% of children of every race believe that media can teach children "that people of their race are important."

- Children would like to see television reflect the realities of their lives — that is, to feature more teenagers, to be 'real,' and, most importantly, to show more people of all races interacting with each other. As one teenage Latina girl said, *"I think the perfect show for me would be a show that had every race. Not a show with only African-Americans or only Latino people... [a show] that will fit everybody."*

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I'm looking for me

America is engaged in a national dialogue on race, but the voices of our children have yet to be heard. How do they feel about issues of race? What are they learning about diversity? Does media play a role in shaping their understanding? As our nation grows increasingly diverse, the answers to these questions become critical. To explore this important issue, Children Now commissioned a groundbreaking series of focus groups and a national poll of 1,200 children aged 10 to 17.

"People are inspired by what they see on television. If they do not see themselves on TV, they want to be someone else," cautioned an African-American boy.

This research is unprecedented in a number of significant ways. While previous studies have measured adults' perceptions of media's race messages — and others have asked children about media or about race — this is the first to bring children, media and race together. In addition, most polls survey people in proportion to their percentage of the population. We chose to survey the same number of children (300) of four races — African-American, Asian, Latino, and White — to explore the views of each race in equal depth.

Children — of all ages and all races — recognize the power of media in their lives. They look to the media for role models — imitating the way their favorite characters dress, the way they talk, how they do their hair. From the shag haircuts of the women on 'Friends' to the baggy fashions of the hip hop music scene, the influence of media on today's children can be seen everywhere. And beyond superficial messages about style and appearance, children are getting more formative messages from the media.

The characters they admire — and the news stories they watch — send both subtle and explicit signals about their value, their families, and their race.

Research demonstrates that children get messages about their race by seeing how and how often its members are portrayed in the media. Media grant legitimacy through the 'recognition' and 'respect' shown to racial groups. Recognition occurs when group members appear in programs, while respect is conferred when group members are cast in positive roles. The absence of group members suggests that they are not worthy of viewers' attention, while stereotyped or negatively-valued roles indicate that they are not worthy of respect. And children get these messages about other races as well as their own, helping shape their earliest opinions.

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Our study found that children overwhelmingly believe that it is important for all kids to see people of their own race on television. White children see people of their race on entertainment television most frequently, followed by African-American children. Asian and Latino children see people of their race much less frequently. Across all races, children recognize media's use of stereotypes, frequently attributing positive traits and roles to White characters, and negative traits and roles to minority characters. Similarly, children believe that television news media portrays races very differently, showing African-Americans and Latinos in a negative light more often than Asians and Whites.

However, this research also shows that children have great faith in media's ability to send children positive messages about race. Over 80% of children from every race say that media has the power to show kids "that people of their race are important." Children also see that "television starts conversation" among peers of different races. That's why, when asked to design their perfect show, children across all races say it would have, *"different cultures, different religions, different races, different everything. That would be really smart."*

Today's children will be the first generation to come of age in an America where racial minorities are the numeric majority. Our future will depend upon their ability to develop positive racial identities and an appreciation of diversity. To help build bridges across racial lines, children will need to expand their conceptions of race and race relations in ways their parents never knew. Clearly, media is only one of the many influences in our children's lives, but young people believe that it has both the power to break down stereotypes and the potential to build greater understanding. One young girl offered this simple advice: *"[Don't] make prejudice on TV. I just wish this world would be one happy — nobody is prejudiced against each other — one happy family."*

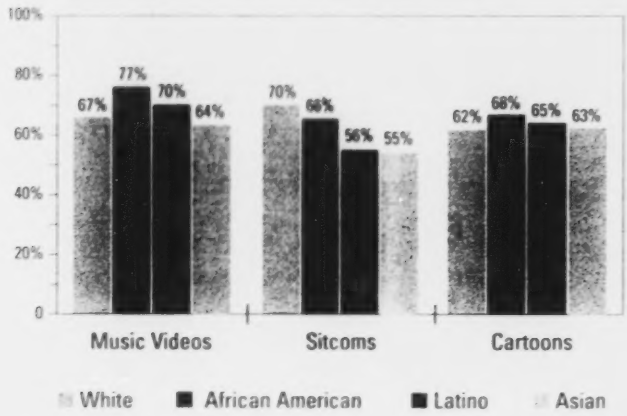
"[When you watch TV] you want to think 'I could do that. I could be there. That could be me in five or six years.' But you don't see anything of yourself, and you're just like, 'Oh, well maybe I'll just have to go do this,'" said an Asian teen.

What I <u>like</u> to see

Key Finding **Children of all races watch a great deal of television including a wide variety of different kinds of programs.**

- Music videos, sitcoms and cartoons are the television programs children of all races aged 10 to 17 most frequently watch.

Children Watching 'Very Often' or 'Often'



- The next most frequently watched TV shows for children are sports programs (53% 'very often or often'), reality type shows (44%), talk shows (41%), local and national news (39%), and dramas (37%).

- Children are least likely to watch television news magazines (22% 'very often or often') or soap operas (20%).
- Talk shows fall into the top category for African-American and Latino children but are listed among the least watched by White and Asian children.

Children Watching Talk Shows 'Very Often' or 'Often'

African-American	**66%**
Latino	**56%**
White	**34%**
Asian	**30%**

- African-American (54% 'very often or often') and Latino children (52%) also watch more reality shows — like 'COPS' and 'When Animals Attack' — than White (41%) and Asian children (36%).

Key Finding

African-American children strongly feel that entertainment media represent their race more fairly than the news media (47% to 25%). Asian children feel the opposite, slightly favoring the news media (36% to 28%). Both White and Latino children are split between the two.

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People I'd like to be

Key Finding: Children of color primarily choose African-Americans as those they admire and White children primarily choose White television figures as their favorites.

- African-American children only chose African-American television figures while White, Asian and Latino children chose both African-American and White figures.
- No Latino or Asian television characters were named.
- Michael Jordan and Will Smith, two African-American men, had cross-over appeal and were listed as favorites by children of all races.
- Moesha and Oprah were named as favorites by African-American, Latino and Asian children.

Key Finding: When asked why they admire a character, most children first say "because they are funny." After that, children of color are most likely to say "because I look up to them," and White children are more likely to say "because they act the way I want to act."

- Most children offer "because they are funny" as their main reason for admiring characters. White children are most likely to list this reason (28%), followed by African-Americans (19%), Latinos (18%) and Asians (17%).

  In the focus groups, a Latina teen answered, *"I [like] Will Smith, because he's funny and he's always got solutions for problems."* A younger White girl chose Elaine on 'Seinfeld' because, *"she's really silly so I think she'd be a good friend."* A younger Asian boy said, *"Eric on 'Boy Meets World.' He's really stupid but he's funny."*
- African-American and Latino children (17% each) are much more likely than White (9%) and Asian (7%) children to choose characters because they "look up to them."

White	African-American	Latino	Asian
Jerry Seinfeld	Michael Jordan	Will Smith	Michael Jordan
Michael Jordan	Moesha	Michael Jordan	Jerry Seinfeld
Bart Simpson	Will Smith	Jerry Springer	Bart Simpson
Tim Allen	Martin Lawrence	Moesha	Will Smith
George Clooney	LL Cool J	Ricki Lake	Oprah Winfrey
Will Smith	Oprah Winfrey	Oprah Winfrey	Moesha

One Latina teenager listed the qualities she looks for in a role model, *"Good personality, good job, nice person."*

- White children follow with "they act the way I want to act" (11%), which was the response of 7% of Latino children, 6% of Asian children and 4% of African-American children.

  In the focus groups, many children mentioned that they admire the characters who do the things they want to do themselves but can't or are afraid to do. One young White boy said he liked Kramer on 'Seinfeld' because, *"He's crazy. He does anything. He's not scared to try something."* An older White boy said: *"They do that stuff maybe you want to do but you can't be like Beavis and Butthead,"* while another listed *"Will Smith ... because he gets all the women."* A female Asian teenager agreed saying that she liked Buffy the Vampire Slayer because *"she beats up a lot of vampires."*

Michael Jordan and Will Smith, two African-American men, had cross-over appeal and were listed as favorites by children of all races.

- White children are the most likely of all races to admire characters "because they are smart" (10%). African-American children are the most likely of all races to cite "because they have the career I want" (9%) and Latinos are most likely of all races to say "because they are popular" (8%).

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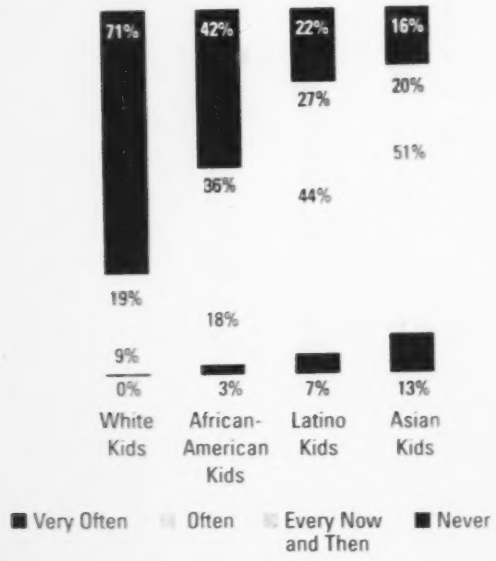
Do I see me?

Key Finding **White and African-American children say they see people of their race on television while Latino and Asian children are much less likely to see their race represented.**

How Often Do You See Your Race?



Are There Enough...	Yes, Enough	No, Not Enough
White main characters?	91	6
Af.-Amer. main characters?	57	41
Latino main characters?	20	75
Asian main characters?	14	79

Note: Weighted responses of all races surveyed.

- This disparity in representation explains why nearly all children think there are 'enough' White people as main characters on entertainment television but they are much less likely to believe that there are 'enough' African-American, Latino or Asian people as main characters. All races agree the biggest problems are the lack of Asian and Latino characters.

As one Asian teenage girl observed: "*You look at television shows and more than 90 percent of it is Caucasian or African-American people, and there really aren't that many Asian people out there in television.*"

As a teenage Latina girl explained, "*[TV programs] are mostly about White families. They don't really show Hispanics or African-Americans. And we, in Newark, that's like the whole population, Blacks and Hispanics. So how are we going to actually relate to something when they're all White?*"

In the focus groups, children also noticed that there were White shows and African-American shows but few with both races together. As one Asian teen girl noted: "*You see African-Americans getting along with other African-Americans and Caucasians getting along with other Caucasians, but you rarely see an African-American and Caucasian together happy and as friends.*"

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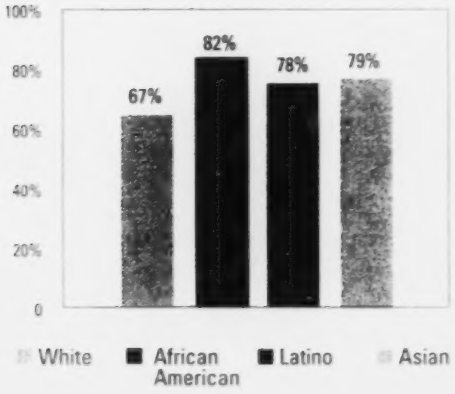
Key Finding **Children agree that it is important for young people to see people of their own race on television, although children of color have stronger feelings about this than White children.**

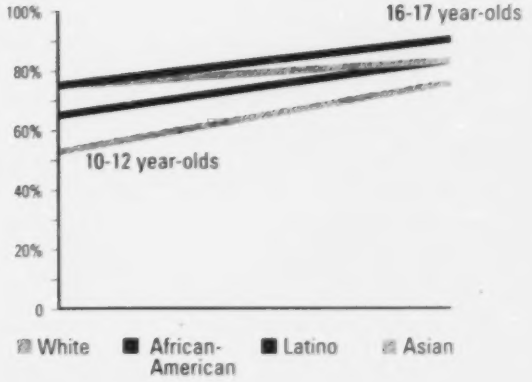
- Four out of every five children of color believe it is important to see their race on television. White children think it is less important than other races do, but even two-thirds of these children agree.

Percent Who Think It Is 'Very Important' or 'Somewhat Important' for Children to See People of Their Race



When asked why it is important, a young African-American boy explained, *"Because it will tell people like us that we can succeed and do our best and stuff like that."* A peer offered another reason: *"If more Black people were on television, the more respect Black people would get in general."* An older Asian girl elaborated, *"Because you want to think 'I could do that. I could be there. That could be me in five or six years.' But you don't see anything of yourself, and you're just like, 'Oh, well maybe I'll just have to go do this. Go be the, you know, the stereotypical really-smart-in-math-type of kid.'"*

It's Important for Children to See Their Race on TV



- As children age, it becomes more important to see their race represented on television. This is true for all races, with 10- to 12-year-olds thinking it less important, and 16- to 17-year-olds thinking it most important.

For example, 83% of Latino 16- to 17-year-olds think it is important compared to 65% of Latino 10- to 12-year-olds.

Young people believe that negative messages are sent to children who do not see their race on TV. A focus group of older African-American boys listed the messages: *"They don't have a chance ... they'll never get on TV ... you are not good enough ... it's hard to get that far..."* Younger White children explained, *"They would think that their age and religion and culture didn't matter."* One younger Latina girl agreed, *"It's sad. It's sad because if there's a lot of people the same kind of way and only one person another way, they're going to be like, 'Wow, there's no people like me.'"*

Across all races, children agree that it is important to see people of their own race on television because...

..."it tells children that people of their race are important," (84%)

..."it makes children of that race feel included," (81%) and

..."it provides role models." (78%)

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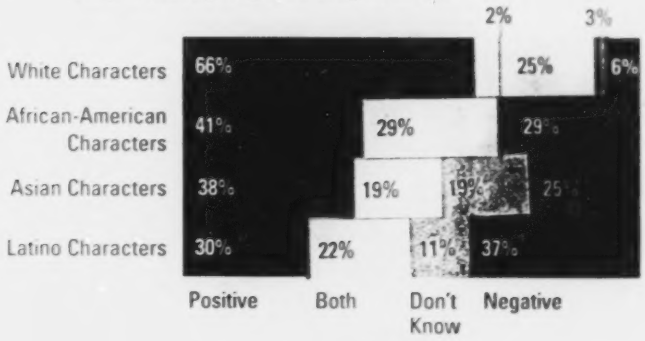
How I see people like me

Key Finding **Children think that White characters on entertainment television programs are most likely to be shown in a positive way while Latino characters are most likely to be negatively portrayed.**

Are TV Characters Shown in a Mostly Positive Way, a Mostly Negative Way or Both?



Note: Weighted responses of all races surveyed

One White teenage boy explained, *"[Television] makes White people look smarter because they have a lot of money and you see more White people in the private schools."*

Another boy in the same focus group added, *"If it's a Black person on a White show, sometimes they show people being scared of them."*

A teenage Asian girl complained that Asians are shown as *"kind of book smart... wearing thick glasses and taking notes ... Or they're like the Kung Fu Master."*

Another Asian teen said, *"I think [Latinos] are kind of seen as lower on the spectrum... pretty negative... not usually thought of in the same way as Whites."*

- Although the overall conclusions remained largely the same, there was significant variation among races about how different racial groups were portrayed.
  - African-American and Latino children are the most likely to think Whites are shown positively (70% and 75% respectively) while Whites and Asians are slightly less likely to think so (64% and 63% respectively).
  - Asian children are least likely to think African-Americans are shown positively (33%) while Whites, African-Americans and Latinos are equally likely to think they are shown positively (40%, 43%, and 44% respectively).
  - African-Americans are most likely to think Asians are shown negatively (32%) while Asian children are least likely to think people of their race are shown negatively (18%).
  - All races agree that Latinos are the most likely to be portrayed negatively on entertainment programs. Nearly half of African-American children believe Latinos are portrayed negatively (49%), followed by Latino (39%), Asian (35%) and White (34%) children. However, it's worth noting that Latino children tend to be most ambivalent about portrayals of their race, as they are also the most likely to see Latinos as portrayed positively.

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Key Finding **Children across all races associate positive characteristics more with the White characters they see on television and negative characteristics more with the minority characters.**

A teenage white boy described his answer, *"You really don't see many Black people portrayed as smart people... They don't really have a steady job. They try to get girls and stuff and they are really laid back."* An Asian teenager added, *"like the shows with White people, they don't fight a lot. But with the Black and Latino people, they're always fighting or arguing."*

Qualities Associated More With White Characters

	White Characters	Minority Characters		Both Characters
Having lots of money	58	8	+50 compared to minority characters	30
Being well-educated	46	10	+36 compared to minority characters	40
Being a leader	44	12	+32 compared to minority characters	37
Doing well in school	37	8	+29 compared to minority characters	50
Being intelligent	32	9	+23 compared to minority characters	54

Qualities Associated More With Minority Characters

	White Characters	Minority Characters		Both Characters
Breaking the law or the rules	6	47	+41 compared to White characters	42
Having a hard time financially	8	46	+38 compared to White characters	41
Being lazy	14	31	+17 compared to White characters	43
Acting goofy	19	27	+8 compared to White characters	47

Note: Remainder of children said 'neither' or 'don't know'
Weighted responses of all races surveyed.

- Overall, kids associate "working hard" and "being someone you admire" with both, although African-Americans and Latinos favor minority characters and Whites favor White characters.

Focus group participants also noted that children of all races are sent messages when certain races are portrayed negatively. As a younger Asian boy commented about the 'reality' show 'COPS': "Like they're arresting African-Americans, people can get the wrong idea that like, all African-Americans are bad, because that's not true."

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I believe what I see

Key Finding **All children agree that the roles of boss, secretary, police officer and doctor in television programs are usually played by White people while the roles of criminal and maid/janitor on television are usually played by African-Americans. Never do children see Latino or Asian characters as the dominant person in the listed roles.**

Which Race Do You Usually See Playing This Role on Television?

	Would be White	Would be African-American	Would be Latino	Would be Asian	No Race/ Any Race
Criminal	11	59	6	1	22
Secretary	79	4	3	2	9
Boss	71	7	2	1	15
Police Officer	53	16	4	2	24
Doctor	67	6	2	4	20
Maid or Janitor	17	35	20	5	21

Note: Weighted responses of all races surveyed.

- Conclusions are similar across race lines although both African-American and Latino children are somewhat more likely to see their race in all roles — both positive and negative. For example, 12% of African-American children expect the boss would be African-American, while overall only 7% of children agree.

  This difference was most marked, however, with the roles of 'criminal' and 'maid.' Thirty-five percent of children overall see the maid/janitor as African-American, compared to 51% of African-American children.

  In the focus groups, children were shown a diverse group of photos of aspiring models and asked to choose which they'd be likely to see on TV in a series of roles. Participants had very clear opinions about the appearance of a good character or a bad character. When assigning the role of 'criminal' or 'drug addict,' focus group participants agreed that some people just have the 'look' of a bad person.

- Choosing the picture of an African-American man for the role of criminal, a younger White boy said, *"He just looks like the type of criminal that would probably steal or something."* Another person there agreed, *"Black people are mostly like robbers. Yeah, robbers and gangsters."* Children also chose Latinos for the criminal saying that the Latino man *"looked mean"* or *"like he could kill someone."*

- When choosing a White man to play the police officer, an African-American boy from New Jersey said, *"He looks intelligent."* One young White girl chose an African-American for the police officer, *"because Black people seem to be more tough."*

"In TV, it's very defined as to what race correlates with which types of characters. I said a drug addict looked like [a Latino] and that's what I've seen in a lot of shows is that kind of look. Unconsciously we've been influenced greatly by the media and how we see people," said an Asian teen.

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What is real to me

Key Finding **Children of color think families on television have more money than their families, while White children are equally likely to say that families on TV have the same amount of money.**

- Forty-seven percent of White children say families on television have the same amount of money as their family and 45% say TV families have more money.
- In contrast, 55% of African-American children say families on TV have more money (compared to 36% who say 'same'), 53% of Latino children say families on TV have more (36% same) and 50% of Asians feel likewise (39% say same).

Key Finding **When asked whether race or money divides people in America more, White children are more likely to say money than race, while African-American, Latino and Asian children are split between the two.**

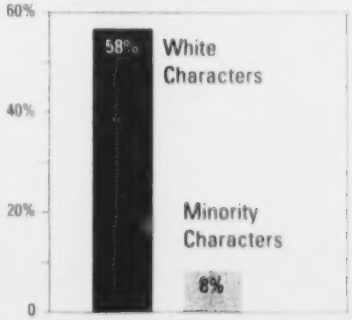
- White children are significantly more likely to say that people are more divided by how much money they have (46%) rather than by their race (30%), while African-American children and Asian children divide evenly between the two (40% money and 38% race), and Latino children give money a very slight edge over race (40% to 35%).

An older White boy explained why money was more divisive: *"People act like they are better than everybody else because they are rich."* A younger African-American male explained his choice of race: *"White people think they are better than Black people. They think they can tell Black people what to do."*

- Children with professional parents are slightly more likely to say that money is the defining issue (49% professional, 40% non-professional) while children with non-professional parents are slightly more likely to say race divides more (34% non-professional, 29% professional).
- As they get older, children of all races are more likely to see money as the defining issue. For example, 10-to 12-year-old Latino children choose race (40%) over money (29%) while their 16-to 17-year-old counterparts choose money (44%) over race (32%).

As one young African-American boy explained, *"You may have friends that don't have that much money or have a lot more money than you, but they can be your friends. [But with] race, it doesn't really matter. They won't like you because of your color. And they don't want to be your friends."* However, a Latina teenager in Newark believes that, *"They consider us the poor class, because we live around here. They consider themselves the high class because, if they want that, they could get it. Now, we've got to struggle for it."*

Among all children, White characters on entertainment television programs are seen as significantly more likely than minority characters to have *"lots of money."*



As one younger African-American girl explained, *"White people have nicer homes or apartments than Blacks. An example is the 'Wayans Bros' junky apartment versus 'Veronica's Closet' — which is full of expensive stuff."*

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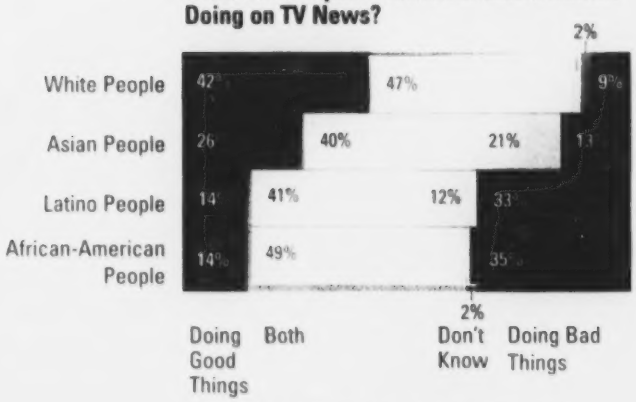
How they expect me to be

Key Finding **Although children think that all races are shown doing 'both' good and bad things on the news, they agree that the news media tends to portray African-American and Latino people more negatively than White and Asian people.**

What Are People of Different Races Shown Doing on TV News?



Note: Weighted responses of all races surveyed.

- A solid third or more of every race believe that Latinos and African-Americans are mostly portrayed doing 'bad things, like crime or drugs or some other problem.'

  This was particularly salient with children in the focus groups. When choosing an African-American for the criminal in the casting exercise, a young White female said, *"Like the news and everything, you always see Black people doing drugs and carrying around drugs, shooting people and stealing things and everything."* An older Latina girl agreed, *"Because that's what you see most of the time is Hispanics and Blacks. You don't see White people selling drugs."* Young Latino children answered similarly when asked how they see their race in the news, *"Gangs. Accidents. Drug dealers. Churches. When they go to jail. Murders."*

- In contrast, half of African-Americans and Latinos believe that White people are shown doing 'good things like helping people and winning awards' (50% and 47% respectively) while Whites and Asians think White people are shown acting 'both ways' (50% and 55% respectively).

- African-American young people were the most critical of the news media's portrayals. They were the only respondents in the poll who see each race as either being portrayed more positively or more negatively — rather than choosing 'both' as an option most of the time, as children of other races did.

  In the focus groups as well, African-Americans were most likely to be upset about portrayals of race in the news. One younger African-American boy said, *"[The news is] sort of unfair. Because like when they have on robberies and stuff, they're always blaming us, African-Americans, for it."*

- Older African-American children are much more likely to see people of their race doing bad things on the news (43%) than are younger African-American children (30%).

When asked what he sees his race doing in the news, one African-American teenage male said, "Covering their face... They are either getting locked up — stolen something."

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nding **When looking at news
ls of teenagers of different races,
become even stronger. Children
more likely to see White and
enagers portrayed mostly
y and to see African-American
10 teenagers portrayed mostly
ly.**

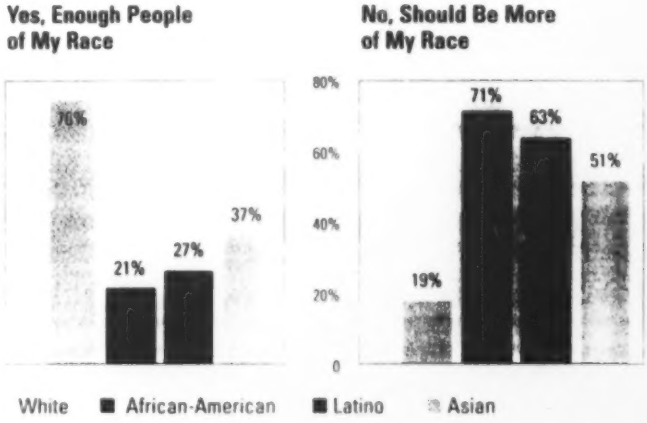
8% of children think that White
are portrayed positively, while
ve that African-American
and 42% believe Latino
are portrayed more negatively
re split on whether Asian
are portrayed positively, or
ively and negatively.

n age, they are significantly
y to think African-American
presented negatively. For example,
/hite 10- to 12-year-olds think African-
s are portrayed negatively compared
White 16- to 17-year-olds.

sed whether news about teenagers is
nger White girl responded, "*Well, I
k so because the news makes it seem
Hispanics are bad. And most Blacks
ecause that's what the news is —
ir robberies. They don't have a lot of
about Whites, so I don't know. It
em fair.*"

ticipants mentioned that they
at adults — especially of other races
d impressions of them from the
lia. An African-American male
l one incident he had with an older
man. "*They see stuff like us snatching
ks whenever they walk in the streets.
one to Pizza Hut... and went to go sit
l she just grabbed her bag and slid to
side. I wanted to say something to her,
as older.*"

Key Finding **Large majorities of African-American, Asian and Latino children feel there should be more people of their race as newscasters, while most White children feel there are enough White newscasters.**



- 3 out of 4 White children feel that there are enough people of their race delivering the news while only 1 out of 5 African-American children, 1 out of 4 Latino children and 1 out of 3 Asian children feel the same way.

  An African-American teenager commented that, "*They have Black subs. They don't have Black lead anchors.*" One younger White boy thought there are enough newscasters of all races: "*Yeah because there is Japanese and Chinese, Black and White.*"

- However, the race of the newscaster does not affect the trust children place in the news. This is true for at least two-thirds of children across all races.

An African-American teen thinks the news influences adults of other races: "They see stuff like us snatching pocketbooks... We had gone to Pizza Hut... and went to go sit down and she just grabbed her bag and slid to the other side. I wanted to say something to her but she was older."

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I want to see me

Finally, the poll and focus groups found that almost three quarters of all children say they have 'best friends' of different races. In the focus groups, many children mentioned that they saw these friends most often at school. As an older White boy from Alabama stated: *"If you go to public school, you look at everyone the same because I've seen what Black people can accomplish in the schools and I've seen what White people can accomplish and they are the same."*

Respondents of all ages and races expressed faith that the media could help bring races together by showing people of more races interacting. Based on their own experiences with friends in school, one White teenager said, *"I think if there is a mixed show [and people] are talking about it, it will help the Whites relate more to the Blacks.... Like in school, television starts conversation."*

Young people in the focus groups had strong opinions about what they would like to see on television. They offered advice to television producers, as well as many creative ideas for their ideal show. Children advised directors to portray all races more often, more fairly, more realistically and more positively. *"There should be more movies and television shows that we're more important, we have better lifestyles, better jobs and stuff like that, instead of being in an apartment that's all trashed, working in hotels and stuff like that,"* said a younger African-American girl in Alabama.

A young Latino girl in Newark said, *"I would tell him that they should put some people that are Latinos, not only put Blacks and Whites."* One young White girl had a taller order, *"They should have an equal amount of Whites and Blacks and Hispanics and every race on the shows. Not just Black and White. They should have Spanish and Korean and Asian."*

"Quit treating people as Black people and White people and start treating them just as people," a White teen boy advised.

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:nage Asian girl from California
"I think that there should be Asians
I don't think that they should have an
son just standing there, I mean, I
they should have them in the work-
ke a friend or something."

one teenage African-American
ewark, *"Be more realistic... Stop*
verything we do negative and start
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y agreed, *"And like they should*
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r ideal shows would appeal to
dy" and have a diverse racial cast.
nted the shows to reflect the realities
ves that is, to feature more
, to be 'real,' and, most importantly,
more people of all races interacting
other.

uld like a show about my back-
nd how my parents came here and
tried to make a living for me and my
And I know a lot of people here had
hat went through everything... I want
g like that, action in something. Not
nch of White people just like, 'Oh,
will be all right. Just forget about it.' I
ething real," said a teenage Latina in Newark. Asian girls echoed that advice, *"It would be a realistic show about a group of friends dealing with school, family, friends, boys and girls, etc. Asian characters and some other races. No fake stuff, no happy endings unless needed. The real world."*

African-American teenagers said they wanted to see their age and race: *"My ideal television show would be about a group of teenage boys, seeing how rough it is out in the real world, towards peer pressure, what they do during conflict."*

Younger White children offered a similar show: *"People of all races and different looks. The movie would be about teenage problems like drugs, school, sex and home situations. The movie would have people that actually solve the problems. Then at the end of the show it would tell the viewers how to solve the problem. It would be like a day in a teenager's life."*

And an older White boy described his ideal program, *"I put [my show] based in the summer time and you've got Black people and White people all in the neighborhood together playing basketball and just getting together doing what they want to do."*

"I think the perfect show for me would be a show that had every race. Not a show with only African-Americans or only Latino people— [a show] that will fit everybody," said a teen Latina.

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Notes

Methodology

National Survey: The poll of 1,200 boys and girls was conducted by Lake Sosin Snell Perry and Associates between March 3 - 10, 1998. The sample of children aged 10-17 included 300 interviews from each of the following racial groups: African-American, Asian, Latino, and White. When results for 'all children' are presented, the interviews were weighted into the base sample so that each of the demographic groups reflects their actual representation in the total population of children [69% White, 14% African-American, 13% Latino, 3% Asian.] The poll has a margin of error of +/- 4.9 percent.

Focus Groups: Lake Sosin Snell Perry and Associates and Motivational Educational Entertainment (MEE) conducted nine focus groups of children in January and February 1998. The focus groups were organized by race and led by a moderator of that race. Older children, aged 14-16, were separated by gender while in the younger groups, aged 10-13, boys and girls participated together.

All the focus groups were shown a video [the "sitcom reel"] with brief clips from all sitcoms shown on the six networks — ABC, CBS, NBC, FOX, WB, and UPN — during one week in December 1997. They also participated in a "casting exercise" - where they were asked to choose the characters they would most likely see in a fictional new prime-time drama set in an urban area. They were shown a diverse group of photos of aspiring models and asked to choose who they'd expect to see in the roles of lawyer, 'good' cop, 'bad' cop, criminal, drug addict, and prostitute. A similar, but not identical, question was asked in the poll.

The focus groups took place in: Newark, NJ [1/26-27/98; Latino children aged 10-11, Latina girls aged 14-16, White children aged 11-13, and African-American boys aged 14-16]; Alameda, CA [1/27/98; Asian children aged 10-11, Asian girls aged 14-16]; Montgomery, AL [2/4/98; African-American children aged 10-12; White boys aged 14-16]; and Baltimore, MD [2/5/98; White children aged 10-11].

Footnote on Racial Terms

After consulting widely with the advocacy and academic communities, we decided to focus our research on the four largest racial groups in the United States: White, African-American, Latino and Asian. As race terminology is constantly evolving, we have chosen terms most likely to be used by that particular racial group.

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Main office:
Oakland
1212 Broadway
5th Floor
Oakland, CA 94612
tel (510) 763-2444
fax (510) 763-1974
children@childrennow.org

Los Angeles
2001 South Barrington Avenue
Suite 100
Los Angeles, CA 90025
tel (310) 268-2444
fax (310) 268-1994
cnla@earthlink.net

New York
355 Lexington Avenue
11th Floor
New York, NY 10017
tel (212) 682-1896
fax (212) 682-3222
children@inch.com

1-800-CHILD-44

www.childrennow.org

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